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CHOROGRAPHY (*CHÔRA*, *CHORÓS*) – A PERFORMATIVE PARADIGM OF CREATION OF SACRED SPACE IN BYZANTIUM

Hierotopy, a compound term based on the Greek words *hierós* and *tópos* constructed by Dr. Alexei Lidov some few years ago (2001), has lately received a great audience among scholars, and is now on the point of becoming a true discipline. Hierotopy is no doubt Lidov's remarkable contribution to the studies of the phenomena of sacred space in Byzantium and beyond it. His vision we all share, and in return we may all reflect back many visions. Chorography aims to be one of these many, yet in agreement with hierotopy and the idea that the quality of being *hierós* remained, since the Homeric times, imbued with what defines god as a god, which is, holiness and movement, vitality and circularity. According to Benveniste, on the evidence of Homeric examples, in the Greek world *hierós* belongs to the domain of the 'sacred'[1]. Thus, the term *tà hierá* denotes the sacrificial act, sacrifices were *hierà kalà*, and they were offered on the *hierôi…bômôi*; the priest who presides over the mystery of sacrifice was *hiereús*, the victim was *hierêïon*, and the verb of his action was *hiereúô*. Benveniste derives other qualities of *hierós*, such as movement and liveliness, swiftness and vitality, from a comparative study in the examination of the word[2]. Finally, circularity was associated with things of *hierós*, among which exemplary remains the image of the judges sitting "in the *hierós* circle" (*hierôi enì kúklôi*)[3].

Chorography intends to test these qualities of being *hierós* against the Byzantine context, and reveal the presence of *hierós* in the space *chôra* (*chôros*), drawing on the intimate relation between *chôra* and *chorós*, between space and movement, deeply rooted in the ancient Greek language and imagination. I will start with a brief philological clarification. *Chôra*

[1] *Benveniste E.* The 'Sacred' // Indo-European Language and Society. London, 1973, p. 460.
[2] *Idem,* p. 456–461.
[3] *Homer*. Illiade. 18. 504.

(chôros) is commonly translated as space, to distinguish it from the place (which is *tópos* in Greek). But there is a sense of movement contained in the Greek word *chôra,* which is linked to the verb *chôréô* having two senses: first, it means to withdraw (give way), to make room for another, like in the *Homeric Hymns*: "The earth gave way from beneath (*gaîa d'enerthe chórêsen*)"[4]. The sense is of withdrawing, while inscribing the space in its withdrawal. *Chôréô* means also to go forward, to be in motion or in flux, like Heraclitus said when he referred that nothing in the world remains still, but rather everything moves (*pánta chôreî*). According to the context, the word *chôréô* indicates either a movement with the sense to go forward, or to retreat, withdraw or recede, in both cases having the effect to "make room for", generating a particular kind of space.

On the other hand, the ancient Greek word *chorós* conveys the idea of collective coordinated movement (as action, the dance), or of collectivity in movement (as agent acting, the choir), like *choròs ástrôn* (the dance of the stars), or *choròs melitôn* (the dance of the bees). This movement is specifically circular; it is an orderly circular movement. On some occasions, *chorós* designated the dancing ground, a term metonymically derived from the place where the choir (*chorós*) danced. The verb *choreúô* means to dance in a choir, or in a circular manner. The word *chorós* could be translated in Modern English, according to the context, either as "to dance around" or as "the choir of dance" or simply as "the choir".

In the Hellenic culture, Classical, as well as Byzantine[5], everything was believed to be in process of change. Space and movement were intimately conceived together: this was an enduring paradigm of Greek thinking and imagination. Chorography is based on this paradigm and on the assumption that there is a dynamic relationship contained in the words *chôra* (*chôros*) and *chorós*, which is creative (generative) of things of *hierós*. Chorography meaning 'writing space' or 'writing (the space) with the dance', will hopefully unveil how *hierós* is inscribed (emerges) in the space *chôra* by means of the circular movement *chorós*. I hope to show how the quality of being *hierós*

[4] "To Demeter". 429f.

[5] "This life of our bodies, material and subject to flux, always advancing by way of motion, finds the power of its being in this, that it never rests from its motion: and as some river, flowing on by its own impulse, keeps the channel in which it runs well filled, yet is not seen in the same water always at the same place, but part of it glides away while part comes flowing on, so, too, the material element of our life here suffers change in the continuity of its succession of opposites by way of motion and flux, so that it never can desist from change, but in its inability to rest keeps up unceasingly its motion alternating by like ways: and if it should ever *cease* moving it will assuredly have cessation also of its being" (*Gregory of Nyssa.* On The Making of Man. Writings and Letters // A Selected Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church / Trans. W. Moore and H. A. Wilson. Michigan, 1988. Vol. V, p. 399–400).

resides in the completion and perfection of the circle, how the vitality of the Christian god reaches its fullness in the circular space of the altar or sanctuary like in the old precinct. The definition of the trace (inscription) of the *chôra* space is obviously at the heart of choro-graphy, due to the instrumentality of the *graphè* in revealing the things of *hierós*. In the following, I will make a brief reading of the Platonic *chôra* as it comes out from Plato's *Timaeus*[6], and then move on to the Byzantine *chôra*, following the evolution of the concept.

PLATO'S *CHÔRA*

Plato's dialogue *Timaeus* describes the creation of the universe as the transition from the intelligible and invisible world (the world of Being) to the visible cosmos (the world of Becoming), where *chôra* is a third kind of entity (*tríton génos*). *Chôra* precedes creation; she is invisible because she is fundamentally amorphous. *Chôra* is a space in cosmogonic generation; she is the nurse, the matrix or the receptacle of creation. Yet Plato's *chôra* remains a specific kind of space, a third genre, with some kinship perhaps to the Platonic *metaxu* (interval, between), where the *daímon*[7] dwells, or a revelation of some kind may occur. *Chôra* is a space-in-the-making, and in-between, indeed, because she partakes both of the intelligible, and at the same time, of anything or anybody that enters and deserts her. Yet she retains neither of those phenomenal bodies visiting her. However, *Timaeus* refers to the *appearing* of *chôra*, to her manifestation in the visible, where the verb *phaínesthai* means "to become manifest", "to show (herself)" or "to appear to sight" (50b–c). *Chôra* appears episodically to sight only the moment when the bodies collide with her. But *chôra* appears only in movement, only in the traces of movement since only the things that move are visible things and leave their traces in the visible[8]. One could therefore speak of *chôra* as itself only in movement, as the moving trace of *chôra*. At the same time, it is fair to say that the trace of *chôra* is an impermanent trace.

THE VISIBILITY OF PLATO'S *CHÔRA*: THE APPEARING TRACE

The trace, which is *ichnos*[9] in Greek, and can be translated also as imprint, or footprint, is a very important notion to come close to *chôra.* The trace has some indexical relevance[10], you may think, but it is only relative and tem-

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[6] *Timaeus* is the first systematization of the universe, the first cosmology, autonomous from myth, illustrating the epistemological transformation signalled by the advent of philosophy.

[7] "the whole of the daimonic is between (*metaxu)* god and mortal" (Symposium 202d13-e1).

[8] The phenomenal appearances, copies of the eternal Forms, are subject to becoming and visible (*mímema dè paradeígmatos ... génesin echon kaì oratón*) (*Timaeus*, 50c).

[9] *Timaeus*, 53B.

[10] Following the classic distinction made by the American semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce between the iconic and the indexical aspects of the sign.

porary, due to the impermanence of the trace. Unlike ichnography[11], the footstep of the Platonic *chôra* is volatile: "(It) fleets (*phéretai*) ever as a phantom (*phántasma*) of something else"[12]. Yet this is all we can track down from her, and the trace is instrumental in disclosing the absconded *chôra*. It is not clear whether the movement of her trace can be judged as performative, and in which way. All that we know so far is that phenomenal bodies constantly visit the hospitable *chôra*, and that their motion is a complex movement. This movement derives from the difference of powers manifested within *chôra***:** "the Nurse of Becoming, being liquefied and ignified are receiving also the forms of earth and of air, and submitting to all the other affections which accompany these, exhibits every variety of appearance *(pantodapên mèn ideîn phaínesthai***)**; but owing to being filled with potencies that are neither similar nor balanced, in no part of herself is she equally balanced, but sways unevenly in every part, and is herself shaken by these forms and shakes them in turn as she is moved" (52d–52e). Such picture of *chôra* precedes the cosmic order, but this may not necessarily mean that there is disorder in *chôra*. Rather, there is a different principle from order.

THE BYZANTINE *CHÔRA:* HER INSCRIPTION IN THE VISIBLE

For the Byzantines, the space designated by the term *chôra* was the matrix of the Incarnation. It was a space *chôrêtòn kaì achôrêton*,[13] which means, "that which occupies space, and does not occupy space". This is the place that one occupies in the visible world, although in a special way. Scholars of the Byzantine *chôra* gave attention to this paradox — the dwelling space of the uncontainable God, expressed in what R. Ousterhout called the "typology of containment". The visibility of the Byzantine *chôra* becomes the subject of a most intense debate around the definition of the icon, discussed by Nicephoros the Patriarch of Constantinople specifically in terms of iconic space *chôra*. The icon has its specific space, which reveals the *chôra* and not the *tópos*, spells out Nicephoros, when he applies to the verb *ekchôréô* in order to speak about the iconic inscription (*graphè*)[14]. In Marie-José Mondzain's interpretation, the iconic *chôra* is a space extension,

[11] First invented by the German philosopher Leibniz early in the 18^{tth} c., and transformed into a science of fossils (paleontology) in 19th c.

[12] "how that it belongs to a copy — seeing that it has not for its own even that substance for which it came into being, but fleets (*phéretai*) ever as a phantom of something else" (*Timaeus*, 52C).

[13] *Gregory Nazianzus.* Epist. 101 (PG 37, col. 177B); also: The Akatistos Hymnos, icos 8.

[14] *"H graphê dè ekkechôrêke pollô ...*" (*Nicephori archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani.* Refutatio et eversio deliramentorum Adversus Salutarem Dei Verbi Incarnationem, Antirhreticus II // PG 100, col. 360 A); French translation: Mais l'inscription est très loin de là (i. e., *tópos*) // Nicephore Discours contre les iconoclasts / Traduction, presentation et notes par M.-J. Mondzain-Baudinet. Paris, 1989, p. 170.

where *chôréô* means both to occupy a space and to contain something, which means that the content and the container coincide. The point of contact between them or the edge of this space is *zônê*, in Mondzain's interpretation, which in Greek means the peripheral belt of contact between the womb of the mother and the body of the child[15]. The iconic line (*graphè*) is the trace of coincidence between content and container, which manifests into visible the limitless Word (*aperígraptos Lógos*)[16].

Nicephoros' theory of the iconic space *chôra* relies on the tradition of theological thinking of sacred space in Byzantium. This we find most sounded expressed in John of Damascus' Book I of *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith* (Ch. XIII)[17], where he discusses the place of God in contrast to bodily place in Aristotle's thinking. According to Aristotle (*Physic*, bk. iv, 4), writes John of Damascus, "bodily place is the limit of that which contains, by which that which is contained is contained". Such is "the air that contains, but the body is contained". The place of the contained body is therefore the limit of contact between the body and its container, as it is not the whole of the container that is its place. For Aristotle, *tópos* appears to be something different from its filling, the body. It cannot be itself a body, since a body and the "place" it fills have the same dimensions, and it will be therefore absurd to say that the two bodies can be "in" the same dimensions at once. Bodies and space must be different things. The "place" they occupy is like a sort of jug that can be filled up. "Place" is therefore "held to be" something different from the things coming to be in it. It is not the same with the place of God and the holy bodies. The definition of God's place must be formulated in a different way. It should be defined not as bodily place, but as "mental place", "where mind dwells and energies" and "where His (God) energy becomes manifest". Aristotelian bodily definition of place cannot be applied to God. "God, being immaterial and uncircumscribed, has no place. He is His own place, filling all things and being above all things, and Himself maintaining all things". The Church, too, says Damascus, is "the place of God", and "the places in which His energy becomes manifest to us". Likewise, the angel "energises" the place, and "further the soul is bound up with the body. Whole with whole and not part with part: and it is not contained by the body but contains it as fire does iron, and being in it energises

[15] *Mondzain M.-J.* Iconic Space and the Rule of Lands // Hypatia, vol. 15, no. 4 (Fall 2000), p. 66. *Nicephore* Discours contre les iconoclasts, note 40 p. 170. *Mondzain M.-J.* Image, icône, économie. Les sources byzantines de l'imaginaire contemporain. Paris, 1996, p. 199.

[16] *Melodos Romanos*. The hymn "Rejoice, O bride unmarried".

[17] *John of Damascus*. Exposition of the Orthodox Faith. Book I, Chapter XIII // A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church / Translation by The Rev. S. D. F. Salmond. Second Series, volume IX. Michigan, 1989, p. 15.

with its own proper energies"[18]. Summing up Damascus' theology, one can say that according to him, the place of God and the holy bodies are to be conceived as a sacred space where God's energies become manifest. In such place, the Aristotelian separation between body and space is not operative, not "part with part", but rather the principle "whole with whole".

Likewise, according to Nicephoros, the iconic inscription (*graphè*) is the trace in the visible of the *chôra* space, which reveals itself completely only as an imaginary[19] (*hennoêsei*) place, yet to be enacted in liturgical performance. The iconic *chôra* contains God as fire contains iron, whole with whole, and not part with part, and being in it God energises the space with its energies. Yet the choric relationship between container and content, and the place where God's energies manifest, are not static phenomena. As Marie-José Mondzain rightly puts it, the iconic space is "centrifugal" and "invasive"[20], a property that derives from the power of iconic contagion. But as I mentioned before, there is a sense of movement contained in the very word *chôra,* connected with the verb *chôréô,* with the sense to go forward, or to withdraw, or recede, having the effect to generate a particular kind of space. My contribution to the Byzantine *chôra* will focus on this relation between space and movement, insisting on *chôra*'s dynamic dimension and her cosmic vocation.

I would like to take a further step from the spatial oxymoron of the Incarnation discussed in the Byzantine circle of scholarship of *chôra*. I want to go beyond the typology of containment of *chôra*, and show that it can be perceived not just as an impossible containment, but as a sacred movement, a crossing through, where 'crossing through' (X) corresponds to the Greek letter χ (chi), as in, for instance, *chôra*, *chorós*. The cross symbolism in the cosmic structure of the universe was recognized by the Fathers of the Church, and was somehow sensed by Plato himself. According to Justin the Martyr, what Plato meant, when he said that the Demiurge placed Him (the cosmic Soul) in the form of the letter Chi (*echíasen autón*) in the universe[21], it was the Son of God. In my article "The Dance of Adam: Reconstructing the Byzantine Χωρός"[22], I read the Resurrection as a cosmic event in which the space of creation is restored again. Creation is restored by the circular movement that initially turned

[18] *John of Damascus*. Exposition of the Orthodox Faith. Book I, Chapter XIII // A Selected Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series, Volume IX. Edinburgh, 1989, p. 16.

[19] Likewise, Mondzain-Baudinet writes: "L'espace don't il s'agit est imaginaire…" (*Nicephore* Discours, Preface, p. 28).

[20] *Mondzain*. Iconic Space and the Rule of Lands, p. 67; *Mondzain*. Image, icône, économie Les sources byzantines de l'imaginaire contemporain, p. 183.

[21] *Reijners G. Q.* The Terminology of the Holy Cross in Early Christian Literature. Nijmegen, 1965, p. 195, note 8.

[22] *Isar N.* The Dance of Adam. Reconstructing the Byzantine Χορός" // *Byzantinoslavica* 61 (2003).

chaos into order, the mystical dance (*sacer ludus*); I then apply it to the Anastasis image and show how image becomes space, a sacred space inscribed out by the holy fire liturgically performed around the church at the Resurrection. This is a *chôra-chorós* (space-movement) type of space, as the likes of fire are held in the *chôra*[23]. The abstract Platonic *chôra* space becomes in Christianity a kenotic space mystically 'eraced' and 'crossed through'. The crossing through of Christ's sacrifice is the trace of the *chôra* that seals the world (Philo, *De somniis* II, 6). It marks the whole world, both its length and breadth and height and depth, as the Son of God was also crucified in these dimensions[24]. The iconic space *chôra*, says Marie-José Mondzain, is vaster than the sacred places and the saints because it contains the entire universe[25]. As Mateos has so irrefutably affirmed, in Christianity "there is technically no 'sacred space' or 'sacred time' for all time and space have been sanctified in Christ"[26].

Yet there are, what we conventionally call, 'sacred places' and 'sacred spaces'. Sacred places are objective, out there, to be reached and visited; there are therefore already existing, already sanctified[27]. By contrast, sacred space is a space that is liturgically enacted, created at this very moment, and experienced (performed) at its very centre. In the following, I will try to inquire how the Byzantines themselves imagined the creation of sacred space and how they experienced it. I will first look into some of the *ekphraseis* of sacred buildings written between 6th c. and 12th c. I will then examine the contribution of the concept *chorós* in the creation of a liturgical performative space in the evolving liturgy around 6th c.

THE MAKING OF SACRED SPACE: BYZANTINE *EKPHRASEIS* OF HAGIA SOPHIA

With these *ekphraseis* one moves into the sphere of cosmology and mystical theology of sacred buildings, among which Hagia Sophia stands out as the paradigm. The texts are an inestimable source to show how the architectural space emerges out as a performative space, created by a movement that is consistently circular. First, I will look into Procopius' *ekphrasis* of the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia (532–537)[28], and then in the poem dedicated to

[23] *Sallis J*. Chorology On Beginning in Plato's *Timaeus*. Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1999, p. 119.
[24] *Irenaeus*, Demonstration (34 p. 69f) is referring back to Plato, perhaps via Justin. See: *Rijners*, p. 196.
[25] *Nicephore.* Discours contre les iconoclasts, note 122, p. 249.
[26] *Mateos Juan.* Beyond Conventional Christianity. Manila, 1974, p. 109–119.
[27] Cf. *Lock C.* As T. S. Eliot says in Little Gidding: 'You are here to kneel / where prayer has been valid'.
[28] De aedificiis. Procopii Caesariensis opera / Ed. J. Haury, III/2. Leipzig, 1913; *Procopius of Caesarea.* Buildings I / English transl. H. B. Dewing. Harvard University Press, 1954.

the Great Church by Paulus the Silentiary in 563[29]. A particular attention will be given to the ambo, and the movement of light. The descriptions share the basic cosmology according to which the church is the reflection of cosmic order, an imitation of the Cosmos, and by entering this space it seemed like entering the heaven itself. Paulus the Silentiary describes the entrance as a sacred crossing, which imitates the triumphal Ascension of Christ to heaven[30].

"DANCING OUT" THE SPACE: THE *CHÔRA* SPACE — A VERB NOT A NOUN

Let us first read what Procopius had to say about the most sacred part of Hagia Sophia, "that portion of the building in which they perform the mysteries in worship of God (*tô theô hierourgûsi*)"[31]. In the eastern part of the church, which shows its 'face' (*prósôpon*)[32] towards the rising sun, space seems to emerge out of movement, rather than to be, already, existing there. It is interesting to note that Procopius consistently describes the plan of the apse by using a specific verbal locution, which implies a motion verb, such as 'retreat' or 'recede', rather than using a noun to designate the space[33]. Thus, the sanctuary "is built up from the ground, not made in a straight line, but gradually curving inward on its flanks and receding (*hupôchoroûsa*)[34] at the middle". Likewise, the columns in the exaedras "do not stand in a straight line" — insists Procopius — "but they retreat inward in the pattern of the semicircle (*hêmikyklon*) as if they were yielding to one another in a choral dance (*en chorô allêlois hupexistámenoi*)"[35] (fig. 1).

Procopius' description of this episode is dramatic indeed and paradigmatic for the creation of sacred space in Byzantium. The dramatis personae of this Byzantine staging of the space are the columns that move in a choral

[29] *Friedländer P.* Johannes von Gaza und Paulus Silentiarius. Leipzig–Berlin, 1912; *Paulus the Silentiarius.* Descr. S. Sophiae / English transl. C. Mango // The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453: Sources and Documents. University of Toronto Press, 1986, p. 80–96; *Paul le Silentiaire.* Description de Sainte-Sophie Constantinople / French transl. Marie-Christine Fayant and Pierre Chuvin, editions A. Die. Paris, 1997.

[30] "At last the holy morn had come, and the great door of the new-buit temple groaned on its opening hinges, inviting emperor and people to enter" … "and as they came to the sacred courts, it seemed to them as if the mighty arches were set in heaven (*ouranías dé achrántous edókenen*)" (*Paulus*, 320–49). "Lift up your gates (*Oixaté moi kleida theoudées, oixate*)" (*Paulus*, 350).

[31] *Procopius.* Buildings I, i., p. 16–17.

[32] Idem.

[33] See note 1 in: *Procopius.* Buildings I, i., p. 16.

[34] From the verb *hupochôreuô*, meaning 'to go back, retire, withdraw, or retreat (of the tide) or (making way)'. *Procopius.* Building I, i. 32, p. 16–17 / English transl. H. B. Dewing, with the collaboration of Glanville Downey, Harvard University Press, 1954.

[35] *Procopius.* Building I, i. 35, p. 18–19.

dance. But how could one imagine something like an immutable column to dance? The body-column metaphor is however as old as architectural thought, and the ekphraseis of Hagia Sophia abound in such analogies between building and body with cosmic implication[36]. Procopius' space is a living body, a personified body that moves 'facing' the east, and it moves in a dancing manner. The curving movement from the middle part of the sanctuary recedes or withdraws gradually (*hupôchoroûsa*) in the lateral space of the exaedras, where the columns — impersonations of an invisible human chorus — perform their choral dance (*en chorô*). The pattern of the dancing columns is to be found again as late as 12th c. in the ekphrasis of Hagia Sophia, where columns in the exaedras move "as it were in a dancing fashion (*choreutikôs*) inclining towards each other on a circle"[37] and "stoas dancing in a circle (*kúklô choreúontas stoás*), which go out and around"[38]. The author describes the process itself of coming-to-be (*genésesin*) of the church, a holy place (*theion chôron*)[39], as being circular, and where "each arch desires to be bent into the form of a circle, and to join with the nearest one", by which "this work of art imitates the whole universe"[40].

But why was so important to make columns take a choral step, rather than to move in a straight line? The ritual pattern of dance in circular formation (frequently called *chorós*) was crucial to enact the ancient mysteries. Lucian of Samosata (120–180) explains why. According to him, dance has a place in the mysteries because of its divine origin, which are said to be "danced out" (*exorcheîsthai*), and "not a single ancient mystery-cult (indeed, even the sacrifices) can be found that is without dancing"[41]. With the creation of the universe choral dance came into being, and the concord of the heavenly spheres, their rhythmic agreement and timed harmony are proofs that "dance is primordial"[42]. Choral dance specifically meant to perform in chorus around an altar, a wellspring, the fire or god in order to reproduce in their dance the chorus of the twelve stars, and meet the gods who performed their choral dance in the starry heaven (fig. 2–3).

The dance of the columns in the exaedras is reminiscent of such poetical figures, and religious connotations. Procopius' language is the locus of an encounter between two traditions discretly intertwined, which both use a similar

[36] Like for example, in the twelfth-century description of Hagia Sophia, which has its head planted in heaven, and its roots cast into the earth *C. Mango* and *J. Parker*. A Twelfth-Century Description of St. Sophia // DOP 14 (1960), p. 237.
[37] Idem, line 105, p. 238.
[38] Idem, lines 220–221, p. 240.
[39] *Mango* and *Parker*, line 189, p. 239.
[40] Idem.
[41] *Lucian*. The Dance / English transl. A. M. Harmon. Harvard University Press, 1962, 15–16, p. 229.
[42] Idem, 7, p. 221.

paradigm to inscribe god through movement. The floor marked out circularly is where the quality of being *hierós* resides, and where the sacred vitality reaches its fullness, in the circular space of *hieròn télos* set apart from the insignificant things that surround it (fig. 4). Yet the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia described by Procopius, emerging out from the dance of the columns is a personified space (*prósôpon*), facing the prospect of the incarnated god. The movement of this sacred shrine (*hieròn perikéchutai*)[43], in which "light comes into being within it", is complex: it "faces" directly God; while, at the same time, it turns itself inwardly. Procopius' vision is the vision of the chorus of the Church around the altar of the incarnated Logos. The invisible space of the *chôra* is hypostasized in the architectural form, which is a trace in the visible (a frozen movement) of the ineffable *chorostasia*, that is, "the choir standing up", henceforth the future name of this architectural part of the space — the choir. The turning inwards, as it were, of the sanctuary is the effect of the divine cause, revealed in the *ekphrasis* later. Anyone who enters this church, says Procopius, understands immediately that this is a work not made by human hands, but by divine intervention this work is turned roundabout or roundly shaped (*tò ergon toûto apotetórneutai*)[44].

Whether this expression (*tò ergon toûto apotetórneutai*) is a figure of style, or a paradigm at work, it is not immediately clear. The etymology of the word (*apotetórneutai*) combines perhaps the sense of 'turning / diverting something from its normal course' (*apotrepô*), and the sense of turning something as by the lathe or the chisel (*torneuô*) by the carpenter's tool (cf. *torneuma*, a whirling motion, as of a lathe, or for drawing a circle like our compass, prob. a pin at the end of a string — *tórnos*). In antiquity, this particular craftsmanship was found potent to describe how the words (the language)[45], the seeds[46], the image (*eidôlon*)[47] were made. Even the mythical Atlantis it was said to have been built up by god as alternate circles "turned as with a lathe"[48], which separated what was outside the pillars of Hercules from what dwelt within them. Likewise, the

[43] *Procopius.* Buildings I, i. 31, p. 16–17.
[44] Idem, 61, p. 26–27.
[45] In Plato's dialogue (*Phaedrus*, 234e), Socrates uses the term to value "a clear and concise manner, with a precise turn of phrase"(*saphê kai stroggúla … tôn onomátôn apotetórneutai*). The words must be "well-rounded", so that they may become clear and distinct (*saphê*).
[46] *Emperor Julian.* Orationes 3. 112a.
[47] Among "everything that exists" (*estin tôn ontôn*), that is, the name, the definition, the image, knowledge and the thing itself, the image (*eidôlon*) "is that object which is in course of being portrayed (*zôgraphoumenón*) and obliterated, or of being shaped with a lathe (*torneuómenon*)" (*Plato*, Epistle VII, 342B–C).
[48] In *Critias* one reads how Poseidon built his sacred island, breaking the ground and making alternate zones of sea and land encircling one another, which he then turned as with a lathe, so that no man could get to the island. What we learn from this story is how the cutting of a lathe demarcates the spaces, separating what takes place between those who dwell outside the pillars of Heracles and all who dwell within them.

universe itself was thought to be roundly shaped as by a lathe, and smooth all round[49]. The effect of this craftsmanship was that the cosmos became a self-sufficient body (*autárkês on*) (*Timaeus*, 33d).

This antic crafting model with cosmogonic implication could be found also in Plotinus' vision describing the cosmic body in *The Enneads* IV. 4. 16 and II. 2. 1. The cosmos is a sphere, circular by its nature "for if it takes the straight path, it finds no space; there is nothing beyond". It is most likely that Procopius was familiar with this paradigm[50], when he described how the architectural forms in the sanctuary are specifically built not in a straight line, but gradually receding, retreating, and withdrawing. It was then most appropriate to speak about the sacred space of the sanctuary as a space turning inwardly, gradually withdrawing (*hupôchoroûsa*), and diverting from pure expansion to circular enclosure around the altar of Christ sacrifice. The paradigm of forms curving back onto themselves is specific for the entire architectural space of Hagia Sophia. But whether the Great church was explicitly turned "as by a lathe" or not, it remains unspecified in Procopius' *ekphrasis*, although in Early Christian literature there is an interest for the tools of the artisan in connection with the cross symbolism, where the tool was a *crux dissimulata*[51]. One thing is however clear in Procopius' text, and this is that by divine intervention (*theou rhopê*)[52] this space was turned roundly, not by a human hand. The term *rhopê* stands here for 'the instrument' (*organon*)[53] of God, a sort of movement, a downward momentum or a sudden descent from above, which could be interpreted as the divine action or the divine grace (cf. Chrys. Hom. 65.2. in Jo. 8.390D). Hagia Sophia is the outcome of such supreme intervention from above, a turning point (*punctum saliens*) in the creation of space, which makes space turning roundly, like the well-rounded words, like the seeds, and like the universe itself "of which it is an imitation" (fig. 5).

PAULUS THE SILENTIARY'S POEM OF HAGIA SOPHIA

Paulus the Silentiary's poem dedicated to Hagia Sophia is an exemplary text for the study of sacred space in Byzantium, and to illustrate my thesis that circular movement generates sacred space. In the poem, the architectural

[49] "Wherefore he made the world in the form of a globe, round as from a lathe (*kukloterès autò etorneúsato*) … making the surface smooth all round for many reasons; … since there was nothing which went from him or came into him: for there was nothing beside him" (*Plato*, Timaeus 33b–34a).

[50] Dewing suggests in his translation of Procopius to read the term as 'roundly turned' as by a lathe, cf. *Plato*, Phaedrus, 234e (*Procopius*, Buildings I, p. 11, note 4).

[51] *Rijners*, The Terminology of the Cross, p. 194.

[52] *Procopius*, Buildings I, i. 61, p. 26–27.

[53] The movement of Plato's *chôra*, and of the things coming inside her, is too 'like an instrument (*organon*) which causes shaking', pushing close together the similar (*Timaeus* 53a).

forms emerge as if created by a "point in motion"[54], where motion tends to be predominantly circular; the circle and the curve are the dominant elements.[55] Synthronon, the sacrosanct part of the sanctuary, where are the priestly seats[56], displays a pattern of ever-revolving circles: "the lowest part of them is drawn close together round a center on the ground, but as they rise, they widen out little by little until they reach the stalls of silver, and so in ever-increasing circles they wheel round the curved wall that stands above them" (364–368). The conches (the lateral parts of the sanctuary), which according to the poet derive their name from the shell of the sea, suggest the coiling movement of the apse — a metaphor that can be found also in Plotinus: "it is the motion of coiling about, with ceaseless return upon the same path — in other words, it is circuit"; "it must still take the circular course by its indwelling nature; for it seeks the straight path onwards but finds no space and is driven back so that it recoils on the only course left to it: there is nothing beyond"[57].

The lighting of the iconostasis takes too a circular disposition: "Pointed at the summit, they (the silver columns) are ringed by circles that gradually widen down to the lowest curve that surrounds the base of the trunk" (871–879). Finally, the upper part of the sacred space of Hagia Sophia, the dome winds its circular curves outwardly: "A stone rim, rounded on all sides, has been fastened upon the backs (of the arches), where the base of the hemisphere comes down; there, too, are the winding curves of the last circle which the workmen have set like a crown upon the backs of the arches" (481–486). These examples demonstrate that in describing the architectural space of the church the poet applies consistently to circular patterns; Paul will use the same patterns to describing the movement of light.

Analysing the order of description followed by Paul, Macrides and Magdalino come to the conclusion that the poet recreates for his audience the actual process by which the imperial church had come to being.[58] Macrides and Magdalino's interpretation is persuasive. There is however one aspect in Paul's narrative that I suggest to be taken up for further interpretation, and which could be defined as a principle at work in the making of sacred space of Hagia Sophia. Paul starts his description with the oriental part and the apses, moves to the western part, but suddenly

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[54] *Webb R.* The Aesthetics of Sacred Space: Narrative, Metaphor, and Motion in Ekphraseis of Church Buildings // DOP 53 (1999), p. 68.

[55] I discussed this in detail in my article: Χορός of Light: Vision of the Sacred Paulus in the Silentiary's poem "Descriptio S. Sophiae" // Byzantinische Forschungen 28, 2004, p. 215–242.

[56] This echoes the image of the judges (elders) sitting in session on benches "in the *hierós* circle" (*hierôi enì kúklôi*) on the schield of Achilles described by Homer, Il. 18. 504.

[57] The Enneads IV. 4. 16 and II. 2. 1.

[58] *Macrides and Magdalino*, p. 58–59.

his discourse becomes emphatic and returns to the central space of the church and the dome. He then continues his description of the rest of the building. With a rhetorical call, which is in my view more significative than just a "ritual exclamation"[59], the poet extols the audience to return to the central part. He does it with a syncopate movement of the phrase, purposely made, by which he does not only point out to a specific location in space, but he does it in a manner that stirs up the attention of the audience: "Whither am I driven? What wind, as upon the sea, has carried away my roaming speech? The center of the church, the most glorious place (*chôron húperkúdanta*), has been neglected. *Return*, my song, to behold a wonder scarcely to be believed when seen or heard" (444–447). With this figure of speech, the discourse takes a forceful turn, a sudden return to the most important place. In doing so, Paul reiterates a mystical gesture, and reflects a theological pattern of thinking. It points out, as well, to the hierotopic principle of the space of Hagia Sophia, which I will define in a moment.

One can perceive in this movement certain reliance upon Pseudo-Dionysius' notions of "procession and return", a Platonic and Neoplatonic[60] twofold structure, which provides the framework for his theological method and cosmology: "To those who fall away it is the voice calling, 'Come back!' and it is the power which raises them up again. It refurbishes and restores the image of God corrupted within them. It is the sacred stability which is there for them when the tide of unholiness is tossing them about. It is safety for those who made a stand. It is the guide bringing upward those uplifted to it and is the englightenment of the illuminated. Source of perfection for those being made perfect, source of divinity for those being deified, principle of simplicity for those turning toward simplicity, point of unity for those made one; transcendentally, beyond what is, it is the Source of every source" (The Divine Names, p. 51, 589C). What Pseudo-Dionysius meant by this call back was the urge to restore the unity lost by falling off from the One; the radiation from the One is countered by an inherent longing for the return to the original source and the state of unity.

In Chapter Seven of The Divine Names, concerning Wisdom, Mind, Word, Truth, Faith, Pseudo-Dionysius gives an account on "the good and eternal Life for being wise, for being the principle of wisdom". He says "the divine Wisdom knows all things by knowing itself". "The divine Mind does not acquire the knowledge of things from things. Rather, of itself and

[59] Idem, p. 59.
[60] 'The sun of that sphere — let us return to it as our example — is an Intellectual Principle' (The Enneads, IV. 3. 11).

in itself it pre-contains and comprehends the awareness and understanding and being everything in terms of their cause". "God knows all things, not by understanding things, but by understanding himself" (108–109). Divine Wisdom knows all things by knowing itself, not by understanding things, but by understanding itself; not by spreading itself outwardly, but by coming close to itself, in that which concern containment and comprehension. Self-reflexivity and self-containment are attributes of the Divine Wisdom. The principle of Sophia is the principle of return into oneself. What defines it is a special kind of motility, a revolving movement that evokes the coiling of the conch. This movement is paradigmatic of the Divine Wisdom.

The structure of the poem reflects, in my view, such thinking that, similarly to the divine beings, the *ekphrasis* of the sacred building should not lose its track, it must not spread itself outwardly, but should return to the navel source (*omphalos*)[61]. The course of the poem partakes of this mystical path, which can be seen as a property of the text and a conceptual frame of the "progression" of elements or the "spiritual structure" (cyclical and anagogical) of the poem of which Makrides and Magdalino speak[62]. In my interpretation, the vision described by Paul is that of a building construed after the principle of the Divine Wisdom, which could be imagined as a space turning inwardly. Paul's Hagia Sophia is, in my view, such a self-reflecting space of the Divine Wisdom. The general perception conveyed by the poem is that of an assembled space, made out of parts gathered together. As I will show later, the description of the illumination of the church enhances this perception. The space of "ever-changing aspect" of Hagia Sophia contains within itself the multitude of lights hanging on twisted chains (884).

THE AMBO: THE SACRED CITY (HIERAPOLIS) FOR THE SACRED RITE OF THE WORD *(TOIS BIBLÍOIS TÔN MYSTAGÔGÔN HIEROÚRGÊKEN LÓGÔN)*

Particularly instructive for the study of sacred space in Byzantium is the description of the ambo from Paulus's poem, the central part of the church, to which the poet conspicuously returns. The text opens up with a preface of thirty iambic lines in praise of the emperor for having built this most beautiful place (*kálliston einai choríon*). This place was consecrated for the reading of the holy Book whose words lead to the mystery (*tois biblíois tôn mystagôgôn hieroúrgêken lógôn*) (28–29); it was from here also that was recited the prayer (the "back of the ambo") at the conclusion of the liturgy, which was a compendium of those previously uttered in the

[61] This figure of speech of emphatic return of the discourse can be found again in the twelfth-century *ekphrasis* of Hagia Sophia (7. 210ff).
[62] *Macrides and Magdalino*, p. 59–60.

sanctuary[63]. The *ekphrasis* continues with the invocation to the apostles and the saints asked to compose their choral dances (*choreía*) and join at unison the poet's song singing together this space (*chôros*), where the holy book is read (46–49). The description of the ambo ends up by stressing once more the liturgical function of this sacred space (*chôron*). The ambo is the place where one climbs, henceforth its name: (*ambatos*) means "the place ascended". One climbs, as it were, visually and acoustically, since the ambo is the place where the people direct their eyes upwards, as they gaze on the divine mystery of the gospel read from here, and where the holy chants are sung (210–213). It is most interesting to note how Paulus the Silentiary describes the central structure of the ambo, the underside of the stone, which is a roof for the chamber where the sacred song is raised. The stone curvs over, says Paul, like some "oxhide shield which the agile warrior holds over his helmet when he leaps in the mazes of the Pyrrhic dance" (119–120). As Hephaistos made the choros on the shield for Achilles resemble the choros made by Daidalos, in the description of Homer (Iliad 18.590-3), so made Paulus the central part of the ambo of Hagia Sophia resemble a dancing floor, where the mysteries were celebrated. From Constantine Porphyrogenitus' *Book of the Ceremonies* one knows that the "psaltae" were placed in the ambo singing "Christ is risen"[64].

Throughout the description of the ambo, Hierapolis, the name of 'the holy city', is two or three times[65] mentioned as the place from where the marble was brought in order to build up this place. Thus, the "fair floor of the place where they read the divine wisdom of the holy book" is made from the marble brought from the sacred city (Hierapolis) (103); the ambo itself is surrounded with fencestones of marble from Hierapolis (168). Therefore "it is meet that this crown of stone on the fair floor of the sacred fane should be called of "the Holy City" (Hierapolis) (171)[66]. The marble of Hierapolis transfers by contiguity the power of its sacredness over the space of the ambo. But the hierotopic character of this place derives not only from the matter out of which the ambo is made, which imbues this space with holy power. The sacredness of this space derives also from its inner structure, which is circular, and from its centrality within the general disposition of the church. Paulus insists on how the ambo is "cunningly wrought", the whole and in details, with a skilful workmanship already familiar to us. The ambo is placed on the central axis of the church as an

[63] *Lethaby W. R., Swainson H.* The Church of Sancta Sophia. A Study of Byzantine Building. London, New York, 1894, p. 51.
[64] *Constantine Porphyrogenitus*. Book of the Ceremonies / Ed. Bonn, p. 74.
[65] Line 292 refers however only to a "sacred stone".
[66] The English translation from: *Lethaby W. R., Swainson H.* The Church of Sancta Sophia. A Study of Byzantine Building, p. 57.

island girdled by the sea, which conforts the sailors from the troubles and the anxieties of the sea (224-9). The sea is the floor of the Great church (263f)[67]. Paulus' description seems to resonate a long tradition in which Platonism[68] and Judaism meet, and which associated the temple to the cosmos, and viewed the cosmos as a temple[69]. Josephus' (1st c.) description of the three regions of the temple is meaningful: the Holy of Holies as the heaven; the holy place as the earth; the surrounding court as the sea; the bronze basin or 'sea' in the inner court (1 King 7. 23–26); the cast-metal sea, circular in form in Solomon's temple 2 Chr. 4.2–3.

The ambo is a circular space, although not altogether equal to a complete curve (*tornos*), but "in order that they might widen the foundation of the space they have placed on either side, round the belly (*gastêr*) in the middle, half-circles in stone, and they have surrounded the space (*chóro*) with separate columns arranged in semicircles" (130–136). The *chôra* space is like a body widened out by means of rich columns disposed semicircularly in order to expand "the whole belly" around (fig. 6). The metaphor of the large body, sometimes described in *ekphrasis* as a pregnant body[70], points out eventually to the mystery of the Incarnation. The vision of the space as a pregnant body, a body in expansion yet confined by "the fair girdle (*kalòn zôstera noêseis*)" (201), is no doubt a *chôra* space. The fair girdle surrounding the space of the ambo is *zônê*, the maternal peripheral belt of contact, architecturally embodied by the holy stone of Hierapolis. The ambo is the most beautiful place (*kálliston einai choríon*); from its very centre (*gastêr*) the holy Word was proffered. To me, the ambo with its large belly (*eurúneto gastêr*) (134) containing the Word, is nothing but the womb/vessel of the uncontainable Christ — the Virgin *chôra* — whereas the fair girdle of which the poet speaks is a vision of the most precious cincture of the *Theotokos Chôra*[71], which brings into visible the space *chôra*.

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[67] The subject of the four rivers on the floor of Hagia Sophia does not concern me here. It received a comprehensible study in: *Majeska G. P.* Notes on the archeology of St. Sophia at Constantinople: the green marble bands on the floor // DOP 32 (1978), p. 299–308, focused on the liturgical function of the fourth river. However, I believe that one should not reject completely Pseudo-Codinus and the idea that the four rivers may carry also a paradisiac symbolism.

[68] The description of Atlantis in *Timaeus* and *Critias*.

[69] Rabbi Pinhas ben Ya'ir interpreting Solomon's temple writes that the Tabernacle (i. e. temple) was made to correspond to the creation of the world, where among other things, the laver was made to correspond to the sea (*Patai R.* Man and Temple. New York, 1967, p. 107).

[70] The twelfth-century description of Hagia Sophia as "an immense (*eurúteta*) space, having a hollowness so capacious that it might be pregnant (*egkumonein*) with many thousands of bodies" (*Mango and Parker*. A twelfth-century description of St. Sophia, p. 237).

[71] "THY precious sash, O Theotokos, which encompassed thy God-receiving womb, is an invincible force for thy flock, and an unfailing treasury of every good, O only Ever-virgin Mother" (Kontakion of the Mother of God, Second Tone, *The Feast of The Holy Belt Of*

SAYING THE FLUX IN NOT UNLIKELY SAYING THE *CHÔRA*

The movement of light revealed by Paulus the Silentiary in his poetical utterance performed at the *encaenia* of the re-consecration of the imperial church (6th January 563), is one of the most spectacular examples of liturgical creation of sacred space in Byzantium[72]. The circling choir of bright lights (*Euseláôn dè kúklios ek phaéôn choròs istatai*), says Paulus, hangs in the space on long twisted chains from the temple's dome, and provides pendent sources (receptacles, or succour) of light (*phéggeos ennuchíoio dochêion*)[73] (826) for men at night. Before they reach the ground they form a choir in unison (*kaì choròn ekteléousin omognion*) (818). Yet not from the circle alone shines the light. One can "see" (*noêsei*s) in the circle a great cross with many eyes upon it (*kaì megalou stauroio túpon polúôpa*) (828), holding luminous vessels. The evening flame (*esperíê phlóx*) (834), brightly shining, revolves round the temple in concentric circles: in a smaller inner circle there is a second crown of light, and in the very center a shining disc. The movement of light does not allow things to be dispersed; to the contrary, the space of "ever-changing aspect" contains all within itself (884).

The words are insufficient to describe the spectacular vision of lights at "the vesperal dawn (*phaesphoríên esperíên*)", which is a paradoxical vision, a miracle (*thámbos*). Language is in stalemate; the eye must prepare for a noetic vision (*noêseis*) (806–808). Paul's *ekphrasis* of the lighting of Hagia Sophia is not objectively detailed, therefore archeologically irrelevant, which may explain why was this part of the poem (114 lines: 806–920) neglected by scholars. Paul's discourse of light, and lighting in general in Byzantium, is liturgically and hierotopically implicated. The circling choirs of light in Paul's poem take a choral path and clear out in their movement a circular space, a space of wonder contained within itself, by now, clearly a sophianic space. Paul's vision of concentric circles of light reiterates Plotinus' pattern of creation of the world as an emanation of luminous source increasingly wider[74], and Proclus' vision of the dance movement (*chorós)* circularly evolving around the *koriphaios*.

The Theotokos or The Deposition of the Precious Sash-Cincture-of our Most Holy Lady Theotokos). The Holy Belt, according to the tradition, was made by the Blessed Virgin Mary herself. Originally kept in Jerusalem and later in Constantinople, now is kept at the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi. During the 12th century under Manuel Komnenos (1143–1180) the official holiday for the Belt was established on August 31st.

[72] This is amply analysed in my article "Χορός of light": Vision of the Sacred in Paulus the Silentiary's Poem "Descriptio S. Sophiae", p. 215–242.

[73] Sallis translates *dochêion* as "succor," "aid," "support," "nurse" (p. 99).

[74] "There is, we may put it, something that is center; about it, a circle of light shed from it; round center and first circle alike, another circle, light from light; outside that again, not another circle of light but one which, lacking light of its own, must borrow. ...Thus all be-

But most importantly, Paul describes light with a remarkable abundance of terms. Often the poet uses a fiery idiom[75], where the fire is at the very centre of his light imagery. To speak about light in the Byzantine church is to speak about fire, as the only lights there are fire. The fire is a mode of being uplifted to God because "the power of fire causes a lifting up to the god-like"[76]. But as Plato says, one must observe that there are many kinds of fire, there is the flame **(***phlóx***);** that which does not burn but supplies light to the eyes; and what is left behind among the embers (*Timaeus* 58C). The region, to which the flame of fire by nature moves, is the upper region. It is here that the invisible *chôra* becomes manifest, says Plato, determined by the movement of its trace. The trace of the flux is unmistakably defined by Paulus, which leads us to the *chôra*. The "bright flame" (*piros phloga*) sheds its light at the summit (887–888); the evening flame (*esperíê phlóx*) (834) revolves around the space of Hagia Sophia, marking out the *chôra* space with their fleeting traces, "dancing out" — as it were — the mystery in the visible. Saying the flux is not unlikely saying the *chôra*[77], saying the *chôra* is not unlikely saying the flux … since the fire is held in and by the *chôra*. *Chôra* is a receptacle of light, a ship wrapped around with fire (*purispeírêton epaktrída*) (892), the seed of fire (*purispóron*) (879), succor and hospitality. Yet not only from the round discs shines the light that provides rest. The round motion of the great cross-pierced by many eyes cherub-like casts out a chiasm of fire. Here, in the kenotic space of Christ's sacrifice, the intensity of being *hierós* reaches its fullness.

But lighting and extinguishing the light in the Byzantine church is part of the ritual, and it lasts as long as the duration of the rite, the time of the liturgical experience. In Lethaby's reconstruction[78], some of the lighting devices described by Paulus may have looked like the *choros* or the *polyeleos*, still in use today in the Greek, Athonite and Serbian churches, swinging about during the chant of the polyeleos, the Cherubic, and the Trisagion, or on the great feasts of the year, presumably carrying out an old tradition (fig. 7) Unlike the frozen choir/the sanctuary of Procopius, a sustained image in the visible, Paul's *chorós* of light stands on impermanence. It exists in the very instance of liturgical performance, ineffably in the

gins with the great light, shining self-centred; in accordance with the reigning plan (that of emanation) this gives forth its brilliance" (*Plotinus*. The Enneads IV. 3. 17 / Transl. by Stephen MacKenna. London, 1969, p. 274).

[75] Like in the line 831, or in the symbolism of bronze, which could be read according to Pseudo-Dionysius as fire and gold (*Pseudo-Dionysius.* The Celestial Hierarchy XV 336C // The Complete Works / Transl. by Colm Luibheid, forward, notes and translation collaboration by Paul Rorem. London, 1987.

[76] *Pseudo-Dionysius*. The Celestial Hierarchy VII 205BC; XV 328C to 329C 38.

[77] I borrow the expression from *Sallis*, p. 118.

[78] *Lethaby and Swaison*, p. 110–121.

breath of the poetical utterance, and in the transience of the fire, which brings out to senses the flux of the invisible *chôra*. Saying the flux is not unlikely saying the *chôra*, but just the instance of saying, as long as the duration of the candle-light, until little by little it dies down…"

FROM ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURE TO LITURGICAL ENACTMENT OF SACRED SPACE

I will now make a brief survey of the concept *chorós* in the liturgical context, hoping to discard a similar cosmological paradigm at work, which the Byzantine liturgists and hymnographers presumably absorbed from the pagan world (Platonic), as well as from the Jewish apocalyptical literature[79]. Although the Church has seriously condemned throughout time dancing as of the evil ("Where there is dancing, there is the devil also", says John Chrysostomos)[80], its anathematisation concerned however the association of dance with old rituals (Jewish and pagan). In the early church, the term *choros*, *koinonia*, and *ekklesia* were used synonymously, according to Conomos[81], although music performance (choir) has received only later separate responsibilities. Byzantine theology and hymnography continued to employ the terms *chorós* and *choreía.* The idea that one must perform a ring-dance round the altar in order to enact the Christian mystery was never abandoned. The same text of Chrysostomos reads further: "God gave us feet … not to cavort shamefully … but that we may some day join in the dance of the angels!" The mystery of the Resurrection of Christ anticipates this possibility for humans.

The Golden Canon of John Damascus depicts the Resurrection as a festival in which Christ and creatures alike, those "that were held by the chains of Hades" are pulled up in ecstatic movement "to light, applauding, with joyful foot"[82]. Yet the Resurrection of Christ is not a mere performance of some sort, rather it is a sacred movement which restores cosmos (the visible and the invisible)[83], and at the same time, it restores the original ontological state of being lost at the Fall, which is performative. Adam and Eve, who fell

[79] I am extremely grateful to Margaret Barker for directing my attention to Jewish Apocalyptical literature of the Second Temple, an inestimable source for the Byzantine liturgy, and an argument in favour of the paradigmatic character of the circular movement *chorós*.

[80] *John Chrysostomos.* Commentary on Mathew 48 // PG 58, col. 491.

[81] *Conomos D. E.* The Late Byzantine and Slavonic Communion Cycle: Liturgy and Music // DOP, 1985, p. 16.

[82] *Wellesz E*. The Golden Canon of John Damascene. First Mode. Fifth Ode // A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography. Oxford, 1949, p. 210.

[83] "Let the Heavens, as it is meet, rejoice, and let the earth exult; and let the whole universe, visible and invisible, keep festival. For Christ, hath arisen, and there is eternal joy" (*The Golden Canon*, p. 208).

"from the choir of angels"[84], are able to join them again. Byzantine hymnography depicts the Resurrection as a cosmic event and a liturgical movement that brings together heaven and earth, and surmounts in the image of the choir (*chorós*) of dance of heavenly and earthly powers, evolving in a circular manner around Christ the Bridegroom[85]. Byzantine Easter celebration culminates with the processional circumbulatory movement of the congregation carrying the holy fire around the church. The emphasis in this performance is on the meaning of *chorós* as *koinonia*.

THE EUCHARISTIC RITE — "A CONCORDANT CHORAL DANCE OF HOLY BEINGS" *(MIA KAÌ HOMOLÓGÔ TÔN HIERÔN CHOREÍA)*

Byzantine church performances frequently refer to actions in which angels and humans are engaged. But the Divine Liturgy, which rests upon the mystery of the Resurrection, reflects this interaction in the most exemplary way. The Heavenly Liturgy is the prototype of the Earthly Liturgy, in which humans could and should join the angelic performance, in which the liturgical hymns are "revealed in a holy manner"[86], and humans can partake into the great cosmic praise in which the whole of creation takes part: "Those in heaven and those on earth form a single festal assembly; there is shared thanksgiving …one single choir" (Chrys. *PG* 56, col. 97). The prayer read before the Little Entrance specifically stresses the joint celebration between heavenly and earthly hierarchy:

> "Master, Lord our God, you have set orders and armies of Angels and Archangels in heaven to minister to your glory; grant that, with your entrance, holy angels may enter, concelebrating (*sulleitourgoúnton*) with us, and with us glorifying your goodness…"

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[84] The Lent period starts with the lamentation of the fall "from the choir of angels," and ends up in the Pascal celebration of the dance of Adam and Eve. "Come, Adam and Eve, our first father and mother, who fell from the choir on high (*Deuro, tôn protopláston duás, he tes choreías ekpesousa tes anothen*) through the envy of the murderer of man, when of old with bitter pleasure ye tasted from the tree in Paradise" ("The Third Sunday in Lent". *Triodion*, Athens, 1930; *The Lenten Triodion* / Ed. Mother Mary and K. Ware. London, Boston, p. 335).

[85] *Isar N.* The Dance of Adam. Reconstructing the Byzantine Χορός" // *Byzantinoslavica* 61 (2003), p. 179–204.

[86] "And thus the Holy Scriptures have transmitted to the inhabitants of earth certain hymns of this hierarchy in which is revealed in a holy manner the supreme illumination allotted to them. Some men, translating this illumination into sensory images, cry out in a 'voice of a great rushing, saying, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place"' (Ezekiel 3: 12); other men lift up their voices in that most celebrated and revered utterance from the Scriptures: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory' (Isaiah 6: 3)" (*The Celestial Hierarchy* VII. 4).

Yet the act of joint celebration between the priestly and the angelic orders, which is the essence of the Divine Liturgy, may not necessarily and specifically mean to perform some kind of dance. The clarification of this question lies on the description of the Eucharistic mystery as a hierarchical *choreía* described by Pseudo-Dionysus in his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy. The angels circled together in an invisible series of choruses known as the Celestial Hierarchy. The first rank of heavenly being performs a choral movement: "It circles in immediate proximity to God. Simply and ceaselessly it dances around (*perichoreúousa*) an eternal knowledge of him. It is forever and totally thus, as befits angels"[87]. In the world below, the bishops, priests, deacons, and laity imitate the heavenly *choreía*, according to their degrees of illumination. The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy is an imitative movement gradually leading to ecstatic communion with God. The function of the vast chain of heavenly and earthly orders described by Pseudo-Dionysus was to unite the highest ranks of the angels with the last member of the congregation through participation and shared knowledge of the divine.

In the third chapter of his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, Pseudo-Dionysus calls the Eucharistic rite the mystery of the Synaxis (literally, 'a gathering together'). Synaxis is both a state of ecclesiastical being in the church, as well as the condition of performing out the mystery of the Eucharist, which implies the preparation of the soul to achieve the union with the divine. First, the hierarch (*hierárkês*) says a sacred prayer at the divine altar, and begins the censing there and then, "he makes the round of the entire sacred place (*tou hierou chôrou*)"[88]. To describe the union achieved in the Synaxis, Pseudo-Dionysus uses the expression *mia kaì homológô tôn hierôn choreía*[89], which is translated by Colm Luibheid as "one homogeneous choir". Yet, according to James Miller, this translation obscures the theological implication of the Areopagite's phrase, restricting its meaning. Since Pseudo-Dionysus associates twice the image of the chorus with movement and vision in his writings in The Celestial Hierarchy VII. 4[90] and The Divine Names IV. 8, the Synaxis (III. 4, col. 432 A) may not just be understood as a mere gathering, but as a moving gathering, with performative vocation. The word *choreía* in the text could therefore be trans-

[87] *Pseudo-Dionysius*. The Celestial Hierarchy VII. 4, p. 165. The same is found in Is. 6:2 and Rv. 4:4.

[88] *Pseudo-Dionysius.* The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy III. 2, p. 210.

[89] "Harmoniously prepare the faculties of our souls for the rites presently to be celebrated. And when the chant has placed ourselves and others in harmony with divine realities through the unison of the divine songs as in one single concordant choral dance of holy beings (*mia kaì homológô tôn hierôn choreía*), then the more condensed and obscure passages in the holy language of the hymns are expanded in the many lucid images and declarations of the most holy readings from the Scriptures" (The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy III, 3.5).

[90] *Perichorúousa.*

lated as "choral dance" instead of just "choir", whereas the whole expression could be translated as "one single concordant choral dance of holy beings"[91]. As it comes out from Pseudo-Dionysus' writings, the Synaxis defines both the community and the liturgical act of communion, the gathering of people, that is, *koinonia* or *ekklesia*, as well as the sacred rite of the Eucharist, giving full meaning to the concept of sacred space which was performed in the Byzantine church in 6th c.

CONCLUSION

The Byzantine *chôra* is a 'space' of creation and sacrifice, of charity, and hospitality. It is a self-sufficient (*autárkês*) space contained within itself, yet a space that no words can contain — a miracle (*thámbos*) — which is not made by human hands, but brought forth by the divine intervention (*theou rhopê*). The invisible and paradoxical *chôra* allows itself to cross the visible realm leaving behind its traces. The discourse of the Byzantine *chôra* space is the discourse of its trace, which appears only in the movement (*chorós*). The *chorós* is the ordering force, which restores creation anew, and makes possible the discourse of the *chôra*. As it comes out from these *ekphraseis* of Hagia Sophia (6th c.–12th c.) the range of visibility of the *chôra* moves between two poles. It moves from the architectural trace of the sanctuary of Hagia Sophia in Procopius' description to the impermanent fleeting trace of the flux and of the circling fire from Paul's poem. The enclosure of the sanctuary is the solidified trace of the ineffable *chorostasia*, the frozen dance of the columns hypostasized in the architectural choir. Yet the choir restores its fluidity during the liturgical celebration by the vitality of *hierós*, which turns the sanctuary into a living space. The dance of the columns and the flux of fire are two paradigmatic visions, which take place in the *chôra*, where the mystery was "danced out" to the eye that could see it (*noêseis*) and the feet that could "dance (it) out".

As I tried to show in this paper, *chorós* (choral dance) was a performative means that gave structure to the sacred space of the church, and by which the sacred mystery (the Eucharistic rite) was enacted. *Chôra* space is as much about movement as it is about containment; it is a contained movement or a moving container. True to its etymology, the Byzantine *chôra* space is a space in expansion and movement. "Centrifugal" and "invasive" (Mondzain), the *chôra* space is however an orderly moving space, circularly turning its sacred narrative. Like in the vision of the round language and the seeds of the earth of the antics, the Byzantine sacred space is a "cunningly wrought" space, turned around, and filled with the vitality of being *hierós*.

[91] *Miller J.* Measures of Wisdom. The Cosmic Dance in Classical and Christian Antiquity. University of Toronto Press, 1986, p. 514–515.

Hagia Sophia is a pregnant body, a holy womb "dancing out" its sacredness, revealing its trace in the visible.

Vision of the church in these *ekphraseis* was perceived as the Cosmos itself, so that by looking at the church it was believed that one (the Byzantine beholder) could reach up to "the great circle of heaven itself". Space and beholder fused together in a single vision in which everything moved spinning round like a *chorós* indeed. This dynamics of vision reveals not only how space and movement were conceived together in Byzantium, but also how space was experienced. Space and beholder were neither detached from each other: they formed a choir. It is such experience of space that might explain the linguistic coalescence of the terms (*chôra*, *chôros* and *chorós*) cosmologically implicated. At the same time, this points out to a general principle of participation in the Byzantine sacred space. Thus, in a space of liturgical experience, the movement performed (*chorós*), the faithful him/herself, and the sacred space (*chôros*) thus created were intimately bound together and impossible to be conceived as detached, independent, and abstract entities or concepts. The final outcome of such experience was a living space of presence and participation into the divine, a personified space, identical and continuous with the self (*persona*) and with the divine — an event, one may say, of ontological continuity between being and becoming.

Sacred space of the Byzantine *chôra* was a space of presence and presencing, a verb rather than a noun; hence the type of realization of sacred space was the dance, *chorós*. This was not a mere physical extension of space, but a living body of liturgical experience. It was a space of 'sacred containment', from which the modern distinction between contained space and container should be removed in order to make room to that power of creative imagination, which has once enabled the participation of being in the wholeness of the universe and in Being.

My thanks go first to Dr. Alexei Lidov for providing the scholarly hospitable dwelling of Hierotopy to reflect on such sacred matters, and for the memorable conference in Moscow 2004, which reinforced the international and interdisciplinary vocation of Hierotopy. My thanks go also to all my friends with whom I shared in various ways precious moments of discussions around this topic, as well as to those who responded to my talk in Moscow. Among all of them, I name only few, but first, Maria Autexier Gorea, Francesco Pellizzi, Margaret Barker, Gervase Rosser, Prof. Peter Brown, Athanassios Semoglou, and Svetlana Yavorskaja with whom I shared unforgetable talks around the paradigmatic circularity of *chorós*, manifested in old languages, as well as in ancient rituals, which must lay at the foundation of hierotopic studies. Last but not least, to Statens Humanistiske Forskningsråd,

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ХОРОГРАФИЯ (*CHÔRA*, *CHORÓS*) – ПЕРФОРМАТИВНЫЙ ПРИНЦИП СОЗДАНИЯ САКРАЛЬНОГО ПРОСТРАНСТВА В ВИЗАНТИИ

Иеротопия — термин, созданный на основе греческих слов *hierós* и *tópos,* был несколько лет назад (2001 г.) введен Алексеем Лидовым и в последнее время получил распространение среди исследователей. Он может стать обозначением полноценной научной дисциплины. Мы разделяем теорию Лидова и, в свою очередь, предлагаем собственные варианты связанных с этой дисциплиной терминов. Одним из них, в рамках более общей концепции иеротопии, может стать хорография.

Пространство — это то, что мы видим, не замечая, то, что мы имеем, не владея, присутствие, которое мы игнорируем, просто метафора. Для культур, предшествовавших Новому времени, это было не так. В настоящей статье я пытаюсь рассмотреть трудное для современного восприятия понятие византийского «сакрального пространства». Это — задача не из легких, особенно после того, как Матеос в своей работе «Beyond Conventional Christianity» убедительно показал, что «в христианстве не существует собственно „сакрального пространства" и „сакрального времени", так как все время и пространство были освящены во Христе». «Сакральное пространство», конечно, — искусственный термин, его употребление ограничено описанием феноменов такой сложности, что в них невозможно разделить пространство и время, символ и ритуал. Хорография пытается реконструировать феномен сакрального пространства в Византии с помощью своих собственных инструментов, устойчивых понятий *chôra, chôros,* и *chorós*, присутствующих в греческих текстах. Но она не претендует на исследование всей связанной с сакральными пространствами проблематики — это остается задачей иеротопии.

По моему мнению, дискурс «сакрального пространства» Византии сопротивляется однозначности, он не может быть определен одним понятием или ограничен одной точкой зрения. Пожалуй, сильнее всего это

выражено в древнегреческих словах *chôra, chôros* и *chorós*, значение и употребление которых перешли в христианскую культуру, богословие и церковную жизнь из классической античности. Этимологическое родство между греческими словами, обозначающими пространство (*chôra, chôros*) и вращение в танце (*chorós*), отмеченное специалистами по античности, оказалось справедливым и для византийской культуры (см. мою недавнюю статью «*Танец Адама: Реконструируя византийский Chorós*»). Греческие слова, обозначающие пространство (*chôra*, *chôros*, *chôre*), этимологически связаны с *chôreuô* и *chôrêsomai*, отражающими тип движения, который приводит к «образованию пространства для», «расчищению пути для», а также имеющими значение «отступления» и «ухода». Это приводит к особому ощущению места, в котором *chôra* или *chôros* передают тип пространства, создающегося в помещении путем кругового движения — *chorós*. Для наших дальнейших построений будет крайне важно вернуться к восприятию пространства как пережитого, познанного через опыт, скорее как глагола, чем как существительного, к тому пониманию слова *chôra*, которое изначально присутствовало у Платона. *Chôra* по Платону — определенная реальность, ощущаемая в пересечении, перекрещивании бытия и становления. Исследователи *chôra* в византийской культуре выделяли кенотический аспект христианского сакрального пространства, парадокс *chôra tou achoretou* («вместилище невместимого»), а также «типологию вмещения» (Р. Остерхут), заключенную в мозаичных образах Богоматери и Христа Chôra из Кахрие Джами (монастыря Хора).

В настоящей статье предпринята попытка более углубленно исследовать динамику византийского сакрального пространства посредством возврата к его хоральному измерению с помощью *chorós* в значении определенного типа правильного движения по окружности (которое можно назвать танцем), а также и в значении «пространства» (*chóros*); иногда это слово обозначало группу совершающих движение. С помощью космологии и мистического богословия, отраженных в экфрасисах VI–XII веков, можно реконструировать византийское видение церкви как модели Вселенной, найти в терминах описания церкви устойчивые архетипы. Говоря о византийских купольных храмах, такие авторы, как Прокопий Кесарийский, Павел Силенциарий, патриарх Фотий и Михаил Фессалоникийский, часто называют церковь куполом небес и пользуются понятием «церкви» для обозначения «микрокосма». Каждое упоминание этих священных построек подчинено общей космологической схеме, по которой церковь является отражением вселенского порядка, следующего божественному образцу. Этот образец прослеживается еще в космологии Платона, в понятии *chôra* — изначального места творения и бытия, описанного Платоном как космическое место и абст-

рактное пространство — пространство (а также движение) бытия и становления, в котором *chorós* является парадигмой Космоса.

Концепция *chorós* явным образом присутствует в византийских экфрасисах, и совершенно непонятно, почему до настоящего времени она осталась не исследованной. На мой взгляд, понятие *chorós* дает нам эффективный инструмент для понимания природы и космологических смыслов византийских сакральных пространств. В настоящей статье chorós-иконография купола исследуется в связи с возникновением образа Пантократора и новых литургических тем, возникших в VI–XII веках. Особое внимание уделено проблематике света и освещения церкви, которая в экфрасисе Павла Силенциария определяется тем же понятием *chorós*. Так как научных работ по этой теме практически не существует, задачей настоящей статьи является воссоздание отсутствующих связей между определением «*chorós* света» Павла Силенциария (VI век) и первыми литургическими свидетельствами о нем в типиконах эпохи Комнинов (см. мою статью «*Chorós* света: Образ священного в поэме Павла Силенциария „Описание Святой Софии“»).

Наконец, использование комплекса различных методов исследования направлено на понимание символического замысла церковной архитектуры VI–XII веков, воплощавшей идею храма как образа неба на земле. Выявлен особый аспект всех описаний, связанный с ролью собственно *chorós* в создании сакральных пространств, — видения, переживавшиеся в таких пространствах, постоянно описываются авторами как вращения и круговые движения. Я пытаюсь показать, что восприятие этих пространств было не просто результатом воздействия на чувства посетителя, его механического перемещения или динамики архитектурных форм (Рут Уэбб). Напротив, динамика такого восприятия была, с моей точки зрения, определена литургически, а концептуально артикулировалась *chorós* — понятием, которое, по космологии Платона, само описывает духовное движение Вселенной, небесных созданий, а также звезд. Восприятие церкви, отраженное в этих экфрасисах, было тесно связано с идеей Космоса. Считалось, что, смотря на церковь, человек мог подняться до «великой сферы самих небес». Пространство и зритель взаимопроникали и становились единым целым, в котором все вращалось подобно *chorós*. Это не только показывает, как в византийской культуре сливались пространство и движение, но и объясняет, как пространство переживалось.

Пространство и зритель были неотделимы друг от друга: они образовывали хор. Именно такое восприятие пространства может помочь в объяснении слитости в языке космологически связанных терминов (*chôra, chôros, chorós*), присущей сакральной хорографии. В то же время оно указывает на общий принцип вовлечения в священное в визан-

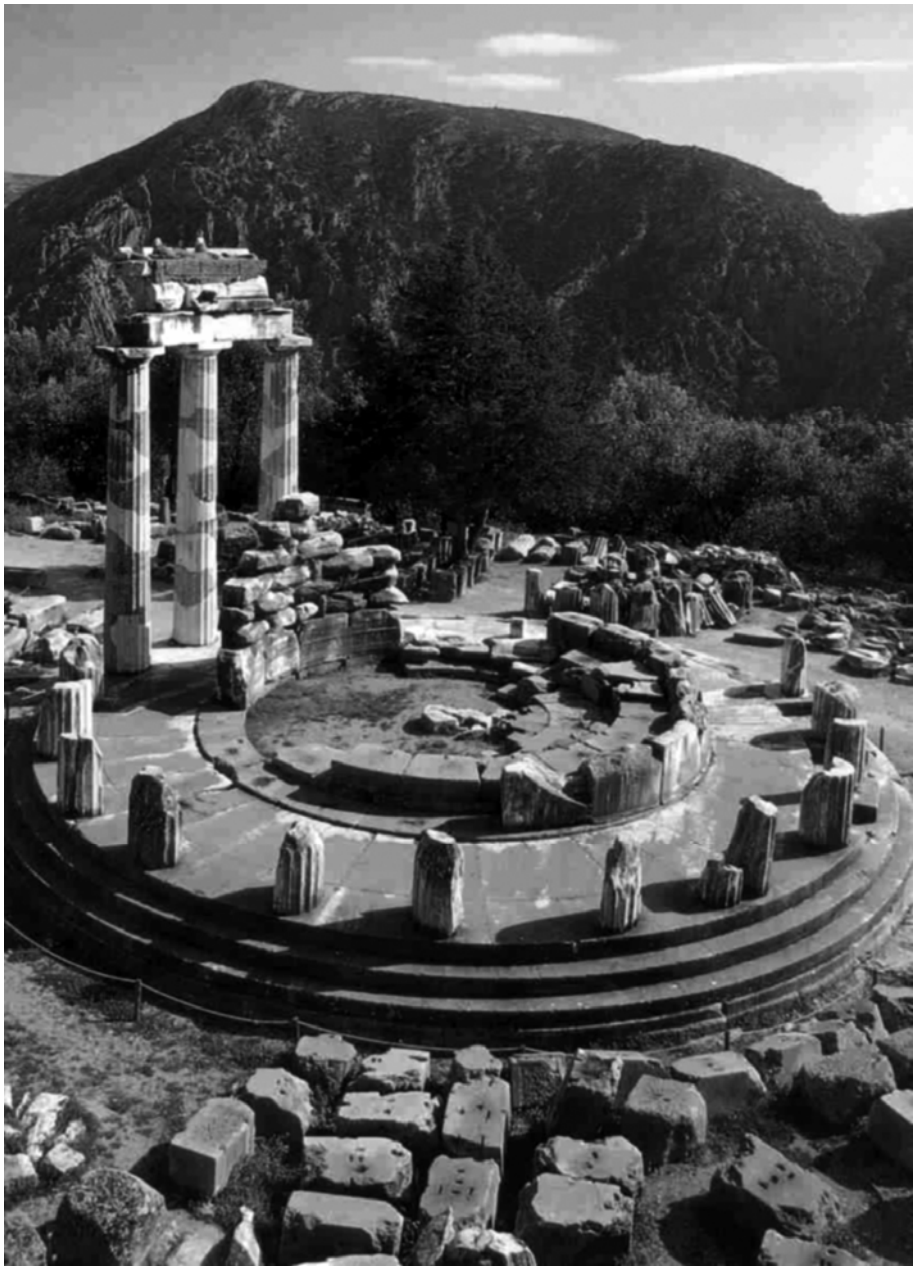
тийских сакральных пространствах. Таким образом, в сфере литургического опыта совершаемые движения (*chorós*), сам верующий и создаваемое при этом сакральное пространство (*chôros*) были внутренне связаны, и разделить их на отдельные независимые абстрактные сущности или понятия невозможно. Конечным результатом такого опыта была живая сфера сопричастности и соединения с божественным, персонифицированное пространство, совпадающее и с личностью воспринимающего, и с божеством — можно сказать, акт онтологической неразрывности бытия и становления.

Сакральное пространство в Византии было пространством присутствия и бытования, скорее глаголом, чем существительным, и поэтому способом воплощения сакрального пространства был танец, *chorós*. Это было не простое физическое расширение пространства, а живая основа литургического опыта. Это было пространство «сакрального вмещения», которое нужно очистить от современного разделения на вмещающее и вмещаемое, дабы дать дорогу творческому воображению, когда-то позволявшему быть причастным к целостности Вселенной и Бытию.

1. Columns in the exaedra at Hagia Sophia

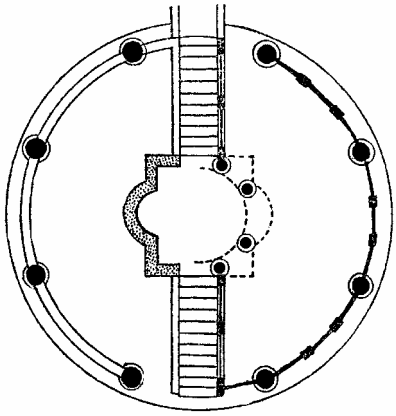
2. Athena's altar (originally in the Temple of Athena Pronaia) showing six pairs of dancing girls on the altar (Archaeological Museum of Delphi, Greece)

3. Herakles wresling Triton, and the dance of Nereids (Athenian kylix, 550 BC) (Tarquinia Museum Nazionale)

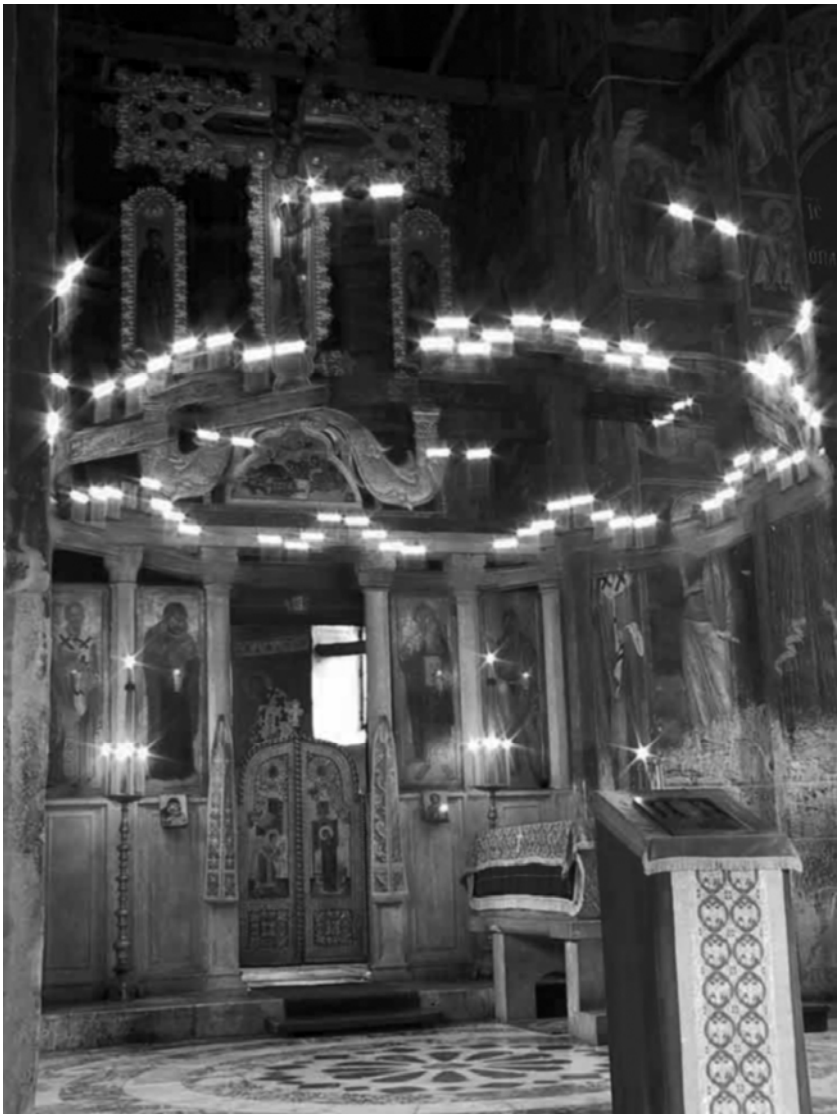


4. The Tholos Temple, Sanctuary of Athena Pronaia, Delphi (380–360 BC)

5. View of the interior (Hagia Sophia)



6. The plan of the ambo (Hagia Sophia)



7. Choros of Decani (14th c.)